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New York

President:	Mr. Azad	(Bangladesh)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Listre
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Namibia	Mrs. Ashipala-Musavyi
	Netherlands	Mr. Hamer
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Yel'chenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Holbrooke

Agenda

Maintaining peace and security: Humanitarian aspects of issues before the Security Council

00-33543 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintaining peace and security: Humanitarian aspects of issues before the Security Council

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Egypt, India, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal and South Africa, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria), Mr. Vantsevich (Belarus), Mr. Fonseca (Brazil), Mr. Dimitrov (Bulgaria), Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Pal (India), Mr. Kolby (Norway), Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan), Mr. Monteiro (Portugal) and Mr. Kumalo (South Africa) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, if I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation to the Permanent Observer of Switzerland to the United Nations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, if I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the delegation of the European Commission to the United Nations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Now it is time to take up the theme of the open debate. It is a great honour for me to be able to preside over the open debate on the theme "Maintaining peace and security: humanitarian aspects of the issues before the Security Council". The subject of the debate is important and topical.

The Charter of the United Nations confers upon the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In acquitting this function in today's world, a broad, more proactive approach is needed. The reasons are not far to seek. There are occasions of flagrant violations of international law giving rise to a conflict. In many instances, the situation slowly worsens and a humanitarian crisis takes shape. Peace is difficult to achieve as, alongside the factors causing the conflict, there are humanitarian issues which need to be addressed.

In today's world, the rules of war seem to have changed. We have seen in the recent past how massive violations of international humanitarian law and human rights have complicated conflict scenarios. Civilians and non-combatants — and, particularly, women, children and the vulnerable — are not spared the most atrocious criminal acts. Attacks on the personnel rendering much needed humanitarian assistance are becoming commonplace. These personnel have been denied access to those who need assistance and their supplies have been looted. As the human cost of war increases, the chances of sustaining peace and security recede.

The Council has a responsibility to address these humanitarian issues relating to situations of conflict and to take appropriate action. The Council's consideration of these issues lays the groundwork for such actions in the area of peacekeeping and peace-building. Today's debate, I understand, is an attempt to discuss the areas on which the Council should focus its attention and the actions it can take. The issue of access for United Nations and associated and other humanitarian personnel, humanitarian components in peace agreements and peacekeeping operations, coordination between the different actors and the question of resources could be some such areas. I am confident that there will be a rich exchange of ideas and that the Council will be able to sharpen its focus on the areas of action required.

With these few words, I have the pleasure of inviting the Secretary-General to make a statement.

The Secretary-General: I wish first of all to pay tribute to you, Sir, and the Government of Bangladesh and its Permanent Representative for convening this meeting on a critical aspect of our work and our mission to end suffering and alleviate hardships around the world.

Let me at the outset express the hope that this meeting will build on the progress made at the first meeting of the Council devoted to humanitarian activities, hosted by Brazil last January.

The experiences of the past decade, from Africa to the Balkans to Asia, have taught us that our humanitarian mission holds both greater promise and greater peril than almost any other part of the United Nations work. We have seen how humanitarian action can save lives, but we have also seen how it can be exploited and abused by parties unwilling to abide by international humanitarian principles and only too willing to subvert such action to further their own inhumane policies.

As we meet today, it is clear that Mozambique presents us with a most urgent case of need. Even as the assistance in some places has been too little too late, I am pleased that the Council is addressing the plight of the people of Mozambique and that the overall response has been very generous.

Mozambique today is only the most urgent of a number of cases. Over the last year, from the Balkans to the Sudan, from Venezuela to Afghanistan to Central Africa, the world has been confronted with humanitarian emergencies that seem only to grow in horror and in pain. Wars and natural disasters, often joined in a terrible combination, continue to cause massive loss of life, tremendous suffering and great dislocations of peoples and groups. The need for effective humanitarian assistance has never been greater.

In all these situations, we must ask ourselves: Are we doing enough? Are we helping those most in need or just those most immediately in reach? Is our aid the right aid for the emergency in question? Is it affecting a conflict in a way that may perpetuate it rather than end it? These are the questions that we must keep asking in order to ensure that we provide the best, most effective humanitarian assistance. We must strengthen our capacity to bring relief to victims, but we must also devise more effective strategies to prevent humanitarian emergencies from arising in the first place.

I recently presented the case for better and more cost-effective prevention strategies for both man-made and natural disasters in my annual report on the work of the Organization. And within the United Nations, I have launched a major effort to develop a system-wide framework for warning and preventive action.

The fact is that humanitarian aid does not exist in a vacuum. In some cases — such as Mozambique today, or with the floods in Venezuela or the earthquake in Turkey last year — we face true natural disasters. In others, however, we confront man-made disasters which are rooted clearly in war and tyranny. From the Great Lakes to Bosnia, we have learned that while the humanitarian imperative is sacred, there is also a humanitarian dilemma. This is the dilemma that too often has forced us to provide food and clothing not only to the victims of conflict, but also to its architects. It is the dilemma that too often allows combatants to use humanitarian aid and its recipients as tools in war. It is the dilemma that at times has turned camps created for the needy and vulnerable into havens for extremists and bases from which they could continue their acts of hatred. It is the dilemma, finally, that makes clear that humanitarian assistance is no substitute for political action.

One thing is clear, however: these humanitarian dilemmas have made the global humanitarian mission more important, not less.

Today, I wish to emphasize three major issues facing humanitarian action: first, how such action can make a positive contribution to efforts to restore and maintain peace and security; secondly, how we can continue to make progress in integrating humanitarian and political-military elements of peace operations; and thirdly, how we can ensure that the legal and principled basis of humanitarian action is respected and strengthened.

It is clear that in many instances, the causes of humanitarian and security crises are the same, or that the one arises from the other. It is equally clear that while conflict and war are the main causes of humanitarian crises, involving violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and producing mass population displacement, such crises often perpetuate instability.

There are no more acute examples of this vicious and violent cycle than the current crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the crisis in Angola. The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has implicated a dozen States and over 50 million people, and had its roots in the humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes region.

It is clear, therefore, that humanitarian action not only serves to protect the victims of conflict from further loss and suffering, but can actually contribute to maintaining peace and security. This is true in both negative and positive terms. Negatively, weak support for humanitarian action can result in delays to refugee reintegration, lack of adequate assistance to demobilized combatants and failure to restore livelihoods or rebuild societies. In positive terms, effective humanitarian action to help civilian populations can give them a sense of stability, restore respect for human rights and lay the foundation for reconciliation.

It is equally important that humanitarian concerns be given early consideration when comprehensive peace agreements are negotiated, as well as in peacekeeping missions. This helps ensure that there is sufficient advance planning on the humanitarian side for operations undertaken to implement a peace agreement and that early efforts can be undertaken to mobilize resources for recovery in the immediate aftermath of a conflict, which is essential if there is to be lasting peace.

In addition, the success of a peace agreement frequently depends, at least in part, on humanitarian work, including permitting refugees to return or resettling displaced persons; giving assistance to demobilized combatants; restoring the livelihoods of people affected by war; and giving fighters alternative ways to earn their living. Recent examples where such humanitarian work has helped consolidate peace agreements can be found in Mozambique, Cambodia and Central America; more recently in Guinea-Bissau; and, hopefully, in Sierra Leone.

I also believe that we must rededicate ourselves to ensuring that the legal and principled basis for humanitarian action is maintained, respected and strengthened. The legal framework for humanitarian action in war is provided by universal norms embodied in international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law.

The basic purpose of these intersecting bodies of law is to ensure that civilians are protected from the impact of war, and when that does not occur, that the essential needs of all victims are met and their fundamental rights respected. We must do more to ensure that this principle is understood and applied in every part of the world.

Finally, I wish to make a few points about the vital issue of resources. As I have said, inadequate support for humanitarian action can have adverse effects — both by exposing civilians to the risk of increased suffering and by undermining the positive contribution of humanitarian action to peace and security.

The Security Council can strengthen its support for humanitarian action in at least three ways. First, it can press Member States to commit themselves fully to providing the financial support needed for humanitarian programmes. Recent Council efforts to do this in the case of Angola have shown a direct positive result. Secondly, the Council could consider including in peacekeeping mandates provisions for financing the early stages of post-conflict reconstruction and the restoration of the rule of law. Thirdly, the Council should address the fact that post-conflict peace-building activities are routinely hampered by the failure to sustain the flow of resources, leading to gaps between the provision of direct humanitarian assistance and the restoration of longer-term reconstruction and development.

The lamentable truth is that far too many of the peace agreements that are signed collapse before they are implemented or relapse into conflict after initial implementation — in part, because there are not enough resources to foster essential post-conflict recovery and stability. The Council must find ways to avoid this tragic and wasteful pattern of events.

In closing, let me express my gratitude to the Council for drawing the attention of the international community to the challenges facing humanitarian action. It is my hope that, from now on, humanitarian concerns will be fully integrated into the Council's efforts to foster peace and security. Only thus can we hope to fully grasp the humanitarian challenge and ensure that our assistance will reach those most in need.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his important statement and for his kind words addressed to me and to the Government of Bangladesh. Mr. Secretary-General, you have talked about the humanitarian dilemma. The purpose of our debate today, as I have outlined, is to address this dilemma. I am sure that what you have said about concrete actions will be heard around the world.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*spoke in French*): It is a tremendous pleasure to see you, Mr. Minister, presiding over the Council today, and also to have heard the characteristically timely and pertinent statement of the Secretary-General at the beginning of this important debate. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Bangladesh for having convened this debate on humanitarian aspects of issues before the Security Council. We applaud your decision to deal with this important topic during your presidency, and we recognize Bangladesh's long and steadfast commitment to humanitarian principles.

The provision of protection and humanitarian assistance to war-affected populations has been and will continue to be of central importance to Canada throughout our Security Council mandate. While implementation of a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention remains the best means to protect civilians and to foster sustainable development, we nonetheless recognize that dozens of violent conflicts persist, and the Council must be prepared to respond quickly to situations in which populations are in grave need. This must be done by supporting their access to protection and assistance and by identifying political solutions to resolve the underlying causes of humanitarian crises.

Indeed, humanitarian action does not respond to the causes of conflict but to the needs of the victims. It is therefore essential that humanitarian efforts be matched by corresponding actions enabling political actors, and in particular the Security Council, to address and resolve conflict. These measures are particularly important because most of the humanitarian action carried out by United Nations personnel and other humanitarian actors takes place in the absence of international peacekeeping or peace support operations or any other form of international involvement.

(*Spoke in English*)

Humanitarian action in support of those caught up in war is rooted in both international humanitarian law and practice. The right of individuals to physical protection and humanitarian assistance, based on the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, is central. The Security Council has been advised time and again of instances where parties to a conflict have deliberately restricted access of humanitarian organizations to provide life-saving assistance. The Secretary-General has noted that effective and timely humanitarian action requires unhindered access to those in need. Canada firmly believes that the Council must continue, therefore, to be vigilant and forceful in calling on all parties to ensure full, safe and unhindered access to affected populations, including through the negotiation of special arrangements and codes of conduct. Where negotiations by humanitarian actors with parties to a conflict fail and the civilian population continues to be adversely affected, the Council must be prepared to take further appropriate action, drawing on the variety of tools at its disposal.

In instances where a decision is made to launch a United Nations peacekeeping or peace support operation, coordination between the political, military, humanitarian and development arms of the United Nations system is simply essential. The plurality of operators in the field poses an increasingly difficult challenge, especially when they come from such varied institutional cultures. We welcome recent efforts by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to enhance their lines of communication and to increase their information-sharing, and thus to better define the relationships between the special representatives of the Secretary-General and humanitarian coordinators, as well as those between the human rights and other components of United Nations missions. Further, we encourage the continuation of steps to improve collaboration between the United Nations and other humanitarian practitioners as well as the relevant regional organizations.

The main challenge is to define structures of cooperation that promote effective, integrated action and that also take advantage of the different strengths of the various players without sacrificing the advantages of independence, flexibility and specialization. Missions over the last several years have demonstrated that any confusion among political, military and humanitarian mandates can have a negative impact on the perceived impartiality of humanitarian actors and action. It is incumbent on the Security Council to ensure that the components of such complex missions are given clear mandates with sufficient resources to meet their objectives — a point which the Secretary-General made so clearly a moment ago.

Canada strongly supports the reference in the presidential statement we will issue later today to ensuring that humanitarian considerations are included in peace negotiations and agreements. This includes not only provisions pertaining to prisoners of war, but also, *inter alia*, to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

of former combatants, including child soldiers; the return of refugees and internally displaced persons in safety and dignity; the protection of minorities and promotion of human rights; and mechanisms for addressing impunity and reinforcing good governance. The significance of including such elements has been borne out in recent experience, including, for example, in Central America, Cambodia and Mozambique.

Finally, we also concur that full and timely support for the transition from relief to development is critical for ensuring that peace is indeed sustainable. Again, the importance of adopting comprehensive and flexible approaches that integrate political, humanitarian, human rights and development dimensions is key. As seen in Sierra Leone, Kosovo and East Timor, the timing of interventions is vital, and planning and prioritization among and between all protagonists — United Nations and other — must begin immediately and should clearly delineate responsibilities at the field level. We agree that bilateral donors, United Nations agencies and international financial institutions must remain flexible and seize opportunities to initiate programme planning during emergencies to facilitate the transition to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. We must also identify, tap and enhance existing local capacities. Grassroots involvement is simply a sine qua non for sustainable peace and development, and we must ensure that local voices are heard. Moreover, we believe that women's full and equal participation, at all levels and in all phases, from relief to development, must be continually promoted. Societies must ultimately have ownership over such initiatives and be responsible for the management of their own affairs.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Dejammet (France)(*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here with us to preside over this discussion, for which you took the initiative, a discussion that deals with all humanitarian aspects of the Council's activities. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and, through him, all the departments of the Secretariat that contribute so well to the preparation of our work, and in particular the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which keeps us regularly informed of the humanitarian aspects of situations with which we have to deal.

I would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the statement he has just made. We note its relevance, and we would like to say that we agree with his observations.

I shall be altogether brief in saying that the French delegation associates itself in advance with the much more substantial statement to be made shortly by the representative of Portugal in its capacity as President of the European Union. But I would like to point out that France is also in agreement with the draft statement the President of the Council is proposing for adoption at the end of this debate. The draft statement, undertaken on his initiative, takes up in their various aspects the overall humanitarian issues that the Council has already had to deal with in its previous debates on this subject. Those are issues that we should bear in mind when we are called upon to act.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility to deal with situations in which violations of international humanitarian law and human rights threaten international peace and security — as, for example, in East Timor. The Council therefore has the responsibility for continuing to deal with humanitarian situations in all aspects of its activities — as is the case with Iraq.

I would like to emphasize three subjects that the Security Council should bear in mind when it deals with specific situations. First, in the Council we should deal with humanitarian crises in a timely manner; otherwise they will degenerate, and finding a solution to them will become even more complicated. I refer as an example to the situation in eastern Zaire in 1996-1997. The Council had at the time begun to work on a response and had agreed on proposals, on which France supported and which had been drawn up with the very active support of Canada. But the Council did not ultimately follow up on those proposals, which it had agreed in the fall of 1996. The planned deployment of a humanitarian assistance protection force for refugees did not take place.

Unfortunately, today we can see the consequences of our inaction. Developments in the region force us to act under conditions that are much more difficult, in a place where prior intervention may perhaps have enabled us to avoid violations of international peace and security and may have helped us to save human lives. This is therefore an example of the need for the Council to act quickly when a serious humanitarian situation is brought to its attention.

Secondly, addressing the humanitarian aspects of crises is not a substitute for political action and for

dealing with the causes of such crises. We should not confuse humanitarian responses with overall reactions of a more political nature, which the Security Council is duty-bound to provide. Relieving the suffering of civilians is a necessity, and it is the task of United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations. But this is not enough and it should not absolve the Council of its responsibilities for dealing with crises and conflicts.

Finally, humanitarian crises can reach such degrees of seriousness that, as has just been emphasized, the response can only be a political one and, in certain circumstances, one that will also require the use of force in order to put an end to large-scale violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Those violations in themselves threaten international peace and security and therefore fully justify the use of such action, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. That was the case in Kosovo. Under those circumstances the Council cannot but exercise the responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter.

The President: I thank the representative of France for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Holbrooke (United States of America): It is a great honour to sit here today before you, Mr. President. We are delighted that you have made the long trip from Bangladesh to chair the Security Council and to continue the tradition that the Foreign Minister of Argentina conducted last month, and that Vice-President Gore and Secretary Albright conducted in January.

This is a excellent opportunity to tell you, Mr. President, what a fine job Ambassador Chowdhury and your entire delegation from Bangladesh have done this month, especially in producing today's important draft statement. The fact that you are here today, Sir, illustrates your country's deep commitment to humanitarian issues, and your personal commitment to improving the ways in which the international community deals with them.

On a national note, let me take this moment to reiterate on behalf of President Clinton how much he is looking forward to visiting Bangladesh 11 days from today. He looks forward to a fruitful and productive dialogue on the ways our two countries can work together to advance our mutual interests. I think that, if he is lucky, he will get a chance to sample some of those fine Bangladeshi desserts that we all did on 1 March, courtesy of Ambassador Chowdhury, when Bangladesh took over the Council.

Today's draft statement is important because it illustrates the Security Council's engagement in one of the most tragic, intractable situations in the world today. From Bosnia and Kosovo to East Timor, Sierra Leone and the Congo, the United Nations faces the twin challenges of keeping the peace and helping to provide humanitarian assistance. These goals are not divisible; indeed they are mutually reinforcing. The draft presidential statement recognizes the inexorable relationship between conflict and humanitarian crises. Although our first priority must always be to prevent conflict, we must also be prepared to deal effectively with humanitarian crises if we fail. It is therefore imperative that we do as much as possible to see to it that humanitarian needs are integrated with our planning efforts.

We must define the needs and tasks of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers respectively. Today we take an important step forward. Peacekeepers need to be familiar with humanitarian and human rights law. They must to be sensitized to the need for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases. They also need to know the fundamental facts in assessing human displacement. To this end peacekeepers must also be educated on, and familiar with, not only the Convention on the Status of Refugees, but the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement produced by Francis Deng, the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons.

I am delighted that the Secretary-General and Mrs. Ogata, who is in New York today, and others are placing more attention on this issue. We had a meeting on it with Mrs. Ogata in the Security Council on 13 January, and I will be making another major statement on this very issue at the end of March.

We are deeply concerned about the inadequate and uneven protection afforded to internally displaced persons. We must re-assess and energize our institutional structures to deal with this. It is unacceptable that legalistic distinctions prevent people from receiving the same assistance simply because they are classified as something called internally displaced persons instead of refugees. To them, as I have said many times, they are homeless refugees whether they cross an international border or not.

United Nations humanitarian agencies have already undertaken to integrate the Guiding Principles into their doctrine; peacekeepers should do the same. I do not

personally believe that shifting responsibility by assigning different agencies to head operations in different areas will work. I believe that co-heads means no heads, and I am glad that we have the opportunity to keep attention on this enormous issue that affects tens of millions of people.

As we consider ways in which the United Nations might effectively coordinate peacekeeping, we cannot overlook the issue of the security and neutrality of these refugee camps. My Government has stressed these points in the past in the Security Council and in the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I offer them again today as we consider how we can comprehensively approach this body's responsibility under the Charter.

The Secretary-General's recent report on civilians in armed conflict and the resulting Security Council resolution are further testimony to the continuing interest in refugee security. Resolution 1208 (1998), on the security and neutrality of refugee camps, is an important tool for dealing with the problem of refugee security.

Resolution 1208 (1998) stressed the need for refugee-hosting countries to develop institutions and procedures to implement the provisions of international law. This is the bedrock of partnership on which UNHCR and the international community rely to protect and assist refugees. It includes such fundamental elements as locating camps away from borders.

The High Commissioner's "ladder of options" on the security of refugee camps outlined last January is a forward-looking and courageous initiative. Nonetheless, in some cases, the problems of camp security are so serious that the international community needs to consider measures higher on that ladder. For example, we should explore the use, in certain circumstances, by UNHCR of multinational civilian police to establish basic security within refugee camps or sites, and we should examine training programmes, not only for host country police, but for refugees themselves, to promote community policing.

Along with enhancing refugee security, we must also do more to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers. The protection of these people who work so hard to assist those in need is the primary responsibility of States. Therefore, we call on all States where these attacks occur to investigate and bring to justice those responsible. We ask that the Security Council continue to explore proposals to reduce the vulnerability of both relief workers and refugees to attacks and intimidation.

The statement we have agreed upon today represents the Security Council's acknowledgment of a direct relationship between security and humanitarian crises. But now we must act on what we have started. This means concerted follow-up to improve planning and coordination, both within the United Nations system and throughout the wider humanitarian community. It means assuring that peacekeepers and humanitarian workers are trained and educated, and it means pressing our Governments and the private sector for the necessary resources.

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General and Ambassador Chowdhury, I thank you for your efforts and for your tremendous initiative in bringing us together today. I congratulate you, and our Government looks forward to working closely with you on this important issue in the future.

The President: I must thank Ambassador Holbrooke for his very warm and kind remarks addressed to me and my Government, and also my Permanent Representative, Mr. Chowdhury, and members of my Mission here. So then I thank you.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): Allow me, on behalf of the Jamaican delegation, to say how pleased we are to see you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, presiding over the deliberations of the Security Council. We also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his statement, in which he set the framework for this debate and our future action on the humanitarian aspects of issues before the Council. We particularly welcome this open debate, as it provides opportunities for Member States to express their views, and we believe that this will provide a valuable input into the Council's work.

It has become increasingly clear that while severe suffering among civilian populations may be a consequence of armed conflict, such large-scale suffering can pose a serious threat to international peace and security. In fact, almost all the situations before the Security Council for consideration have a humanitarian dimension either in a direct or indirect manner. The Council must therefore address these issues with the greatest degree of urgency.

The tragic situation emanating from deliberate attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers and other non-combatants rests at the heart of today's discussions and demonstrates a clear need for the Council to continue to strongly insist upon full respect at all levels for the

principles of international humanitarian and human rights law. The Council must focus on the question of impunity by emphasizing the need for States to bring to justice those who target civilians, and we must continue to cooperate with the international criminal tribunals, which constitute important mechanisms for deterring gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

It is unfortunate that the practice of impeding humanitarian access to civilians and the deliberate targeting of humanitarian personnel have increased in several areas of conflict. The denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict is unacceptable and should be condemned in the strongest terms. The attention given to this issue by the Council during our discussions last month was therefore very timely. While States have the primary responsibility to protect and provide for civilians within their territory and to ensure the safe, unimpeded access of humanitarian workers to civilians in need, the Council has a critical role to play in helping to create a secure environment for such assistance.

The role of peacekeepers in preventing and containing humanitarian crises, collaborating with humanitarian agencies in providing safe environments for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, monitoring ceasefire agreements and separating combatants from non-combatants has been vital in assisting with the protection of civilians. This role requires close cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the representatives of all the funds and programmes and the special representatives of the Secretary-General. In this regard, we wish to note the progress that has been achieved with regard to the actions taken following the Secretary-General's reform initiatives.

For humanitarian assistance to be effective, we must be able to count on the cooperation of the parties involved in the conflict.

The effectiveness of humanitarian action by the Security Council related to humanitarian situations hinges on several factors, including the complete neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian workers while respecting the laws and customs of the countries in which they operate, the proper training of humanitarian staff and peacekeeping personnel, the provision of adequate financial resources, of which the Secretary-General made mention, the need to ensure the protection of humanitarian personnel, the continued provision of assistance to populations in need and the inclusion in relevant peace negotiations and agreements of specific humanitarian elements which take account of the needs and special circumstances of civilian populations. This will help to advance the process of reconciliation, demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of armed personnel and the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Action on humanitarian grounds must not be seen as a substitute for action to resolve conflicts at the political level. Humanitarian action on its own cannot resolve conflicts which, by their nature, arise from political differences. Humanitarian action that is not complemented by diplomatic or political solutions can, in fact, undermine the effectiveness of humanitarian activities and may even make the situation worse.

In this regard, there are several considerations that must be given priority attention. First, there is no doubt that the elimination of humanitarian crises will enhance efforts by the Council to address the root causes of conflicts, which give rise to these complex humanitarian emergencies.

Secondly, greater attention to our role in conflict prevention is essential. The Council must react promptly to deploy preventive peacekeeping missions, where these are appropriate, and cooperate with other organs of the United Nations in order to adopt more integrative approaches to prevent the escalation of conflicts.

Thirdly, the link between the economic, social and developmental aspects of conflicts is crucial.

Fourthly, the Council must develop better coordination with relevant bodies within the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions for continued post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation and peace-building efforts to ensure sustainable peace. There is also a need for the Council to support moves from humanitarian action to addressing long-term economic and social development.

Fifthly, the Council must bear in mind that, while sanctions can be an effective tool to punish those who deliberately violate international law, they can also have a severe impact on civilians. The Council's attention to the application of smart sanctions, which punish those they are intended to punish while not resulting in serious humanitarian consequences, is therefore important to our debate.

In conclusion, my delegation again wishes to thank you, Mr. President, and the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, for the timely initiative in convening this debate and for the preparation of the draft presidential statement which the Council will adopt later today. We are confident that the Council will redouble its efforts to address those humanitarian aspects of armed conflicts which continue to pose a threat to international peace and security and that we will do our best to ensure an appropriate response in the interests of humanity.

The President: I thank the representative of Jamaica for the kind words she addressed to me, to my country and to the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh here in New York.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting of the Council. I would also like to commend the delegation of Bangladesh for convening this meeting of the Council to discuss the important subject of humanitarian aspects of issues before the Security Council.

The Council has, in the past, addressed aspects of the issue, but would certainly benefit from a further, more comprehensive and integrated discussion of the subject. The issue is important and relevant in the context of the conflict situations in our time, be they in Africa, Asia or the Balkans. In many of these conflicts, many non-combatants, particularly women, children and other vulnerable groups, find themselves helpless victims in situations beyond their control. They become uprooted and displaced in their own country or are forced to flee across borders for safety and are compelled to stay as refugees for months and sometimes years before they can return to their villages and homes. Indeed, in a number of conflict situations, innocent civilians are sometimes used as human shields or as pawns among the combatants. In other situations, such as in Sierra Leone, the most vulnerable of the civilian population, namely children, have been manipulated and used by the rebel forces as direct instruments of war, with traumatic consequences for these child soldiers and their families.

The defencelessness and vulnerability of these unarmed civilians in many conflict situations demand the serious attention of this Council. In such situations it is imperative for the international community, and this Council in particular, to take immediate and appropriate actions to ameliorate their tragic situations. It is incumbent upon the Council, in its consideration of specific conflict situations, also to deal with the humanitarian dimension of the conflicts and to consider appropriate measures. The Council, acting on behalf of the international community, in fulfilling its role as the United Nations organ charged with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should make every effort to ensure their protection, the quick delivery of humanitarian assistance and their safe return to their villages and homes at the end of the conflict. My delegation believes that prompt and appropriate responses to such humanitarian situations by the Council would avert humanitarian tragedies of enormous proportions, such as the world has witnessed in recent times, much to the discredit of the United Nations and this Council in particular.

Clearly, the humanitarian dimension in armed conflict is an important element in the maintenance of international peace and security in view of their cause-and-effect relationship, which the Council can ill afford to ignore. The Council has an important role to play in addressing this issue. There should be close monitoring of conflict situations and early recognition of manifestations of humanitarian tragedies. Unfolding humanitarian tragedies should be highlighted in the early stages of conflict and efforts made in galvanizing coordinated international actions. Perpetrators of violations of human rights, who are the cause of so many of these humanitarian tragedies, should be identified and appropriately chastised and punished whenever possible. They must not be allowed to carry on their inhumane activities with impunity. The setting up of appropriate national or international tribunals to look into these cases would be a concrete deterrent measure to curb this culture of impunity, which is so prevalent in many conflict situations. Would-be violators of human rights should be forewarned that they cannot hope to escape from the long arm of the law, domestic or international, even after the end of the conflict.

It is equally important for the Council to ensure the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian assistance to war-affected civilians and the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated humanitarian personnel. The work of these humanitarian workers is as indispensable as that performed by peacekeepers, and in many ways more dangerous, because they are unarmed and vulnerable to armed attacks or harassment. Their selfless dedication and commitment to their humanitarian calling deserves not only our unqualified admiration but, more importantly, our sustained, strong support, which can be best demonstrated by ensuring their personal security while

they are on their often risky humanitarian missions. Peacekeepers can also assist in the humanitarian field if they are made more aware of the humanitarian dimension of their oftentimes complex peacekeeping duties. This can be done through integrating humanitarian components into peacekeeping operations and providing appropriate training in dealing with such situations, as well as familiarizing them with international humanitarian law and human rights. At the same time, the question of adequate funding for humanitarian programmes should also be given serious attention in any meaningful discussion of conflict situations in the Council, because without it, many of the programmes and activities in the humanitarian field cannot be effectively implemented.

The draft statement which the Council intends to adopt at the end of this debate reaffirms the Charter responsibilities of the Security Council and delineates the various measures which could be taken by the Council in the fulfilment of these responsibilities as they relate to humanitarian crises in armed conflict. While not exhaustive, the draft statement contains a comprehensive list of procedural and practical actions which the Council could take, either acting alone or in coordination with other international humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations. It is hoped that the highlighting of this issue through this formal meeting of the Council will serve to further sensitize both Council members and the international community as a whole to the seriousness of the humanitarian problems affecting civilians caught in armed conflicts. It is further hoped that this debate will galvanize international action for their amelioration, wherever they occur.

Of course, the measures that are being proposed will only ameliorate the dire situations of civilians in armed conflict; they will not solve the humanitarian problems entirely, which can only happen when the conflict is ended. This must be addressed separately in comprehensive fashion by the parties to the conflict. We should incorporate, as an indispensable element, humanitarian support. Until the conflicts are resolved, there is a need for the international community to highlight and ease the plight of the unarmed civilians and to ensure their protection, as well as the protection of humanitarian workers, under international law.

Hence, the importance of this debate in the Council on this issue today. In addressing this issue, it is imperative for the Council to be well informed, well coordinated and, most important of all, fully responsive.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words he addressed to me and to the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Mr. Chowdhury.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased to see the Security Council convened under your authority, Sir, at this meeting devoted to the theme "Maintaining peace and security: humanitarian aspects of issues before the Security Council". I thank the delegation of Bangladesh, especially Ambassador Chowdhury, for having taken the initiative of convening such a meeting, which gives us a useful opportunity to take a closer look at the role to be played by the Security Council in supporting the work of humanitarian organizations and improving the framework in which humanitarian activity is conducted.

I also thank the Secretary-General for his important statement.

These days, most conflicts which the Security Council must address are internal ones during the course of which systematic and massive violations of human rights are committed. In many cases, it becomes impossible to distinguish between combatants, civilians, peacekeeping forces, humanitarian forces and humanitarian and associated personnel. In some instances, protected persons are directly targeted by the belligerents. Mali resolutely condemns such acts and considers it urgent that they be stopped.

Because the security of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance missions is of the highest importance in situations of crisis and conflict, the Security Council must, in accordance with its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, ensure the normal conduct of humanitarian action in a favourable and peaceful environment. In this respect, the Council must see to it that United Nations, humanitarian and associated personnel carry out their missions to the best of their ability.

In this regard, the parties to a conflict are obligated to allow the unconditional access of humanitarian personnel to all those affected by hostilities. Moreover, the Security Council must once again emphasize that obstacles to such access are unacceptable violations of international humanitarian law and that those responsible must answer for their actions.

Similarly, when the Council decides to deploy a peacekeeping operation or preventive mission, its mandate must be defined clearly and precisely. The personnel of operations to keep or restore the peace must also enjoy the necessary resources to accomplish their missions. The international community must bear the financial costs of such operations because the maintenance of international peace and security — which, I reiterate, is the primary responsibility of the Security Council — can be neither delegated nor subcontracted to others, including regional organizations wishing to undertake important commitments in human or financial terms.

My delegation also wishes to draw attention to the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as to the devastating effects of anti-personnel landmines. Most violations of international humanitarian law we see today have been committed with weapons of this category. While the primary responsibility for controlling the import, export and manufacture of light weapons and anti-personnel landmines falls to States, the fact remains that the Security Council has a role to play in this regard, especially through the imposition of arms embargoes. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the recommendation, made by the Secretary-General in his report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, that arms embargoes be imposed in situations where civilians and protected persons are targeted by the parties to a conflict or when it is known that the parties are behind systematic and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, particularly the recruiting of child soldiers.

The nature and scope of humanitarian action require a comprehensive and integrated approach to the management of humanitarian crisis situations. My delegation therefore believes that we should unite participants from various spheres in a single framework for action, so that they can work together on humanitarian activities and assistance.

In this regard, Mali firmly supports efforts to coordinate and strengthen the relevant United Nations bodies. My delegation is also of the view that the Organization would benefit further from the establishment of close cooperation outside the United Nations system that would encompass non-state organizations, civil society and regional and non-governmental organizations.

In conclusion, I wish to state that my delegation fully supports the presidential statement we are to adopt at the end of this debate.

The President: I thank the representative of Mali for the kind words he addressed to me, to my country, Bangladesh, and to our Permanent Representative, Mr. Chowdhury, for his initiatives and contributions.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this important meeting of the Security Council. I should like at the outset to thank your country and delegation for their wise activities in the presidency of the Security Council, which they have assumed this month. We also wish to convey our appreciation to you for having devoted your attention to a topic of such importance as that before us today.

Humanitarian issues are not new to the discussions and work of the Security Council. Indeed, in exercising its prerogatives as the organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council has on many occasions addressed humanitarian aspects of the questions before it, in particular at the time of the establishment or extension of peacekeeping operations. Moreover, we have noted in recent years that the Council has given special attention to aspects as varied as, *inter alia*, protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others affected by conflicts, protection of United Nations personnel, associated personnel and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones, protection of children in armed conflicts, protection of civilians in armed conflicts, refugees and so forth.

I wish to take this opportunity to state the great importance that my country, Tunisia, attaches to continued action by the entire international community to address humanitarian concerns stemming from conflict situations. The initiative taken by the President of the Council and the contributions of its members make it possible for us to discuss a number of issues as components of a comprehensive humanitarian dimension, placing them in the context of their relationship to the Council's responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and outlining the general framework within which this body should approach these questions, bearing in mind certain consensus parameters.

Tunisia wishes to emphasize the following points. First, humanitarian activities are necessary in armed conflicts, because, as the Secretary-General himself clearly underscored in his important statement, this is a basic and undisputed duty of the international community. The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, should therefore shoulder its responsibility in this field.

Second, there can be no doubt about the merit of highlighting the humanitarian dimension of armed conflicts and of working to make that dimension an integral part of efforts aimed at ending such conflicts, such as negotiations to conclude peace agreements, the conduct of peacekeeping operations and post-conflict peace-building activities.

Third, we fully concur in the need for real action to be taken to tackle aspects relating both to access for personnel responsible for delivering humanitarian assistance and to the financing of that assistance, and the need for coordination among the various actors. There is a need for a concerted and coordinated strategy to enhance the effectiveness and impact of humanitarian activities and to bolster the role and the functions of humanitarian assistance as a factor that can promote rapid normalization in the framework of the process of settling an armed conflict.

Fourth, the conduct of humanitarian assistance activities must of necessity strictly comply with the principles of the sovereignty of States, their political independence, their territorial integrity and non-interference in their internal affairs, as articulated by the United Nations Charter and the international conventions in force, including those relating to international humanitarian law. These cardinal principles are still the essential foundation of the conduct of international relations and will serve to preserve the noble nature of humanitarian activities.

Fifth, a key factor in the successful conduct of humanitarian activities seems to be the need to secure the consent of the parties concerned, in particular the Governments of the countries affected by conflicts. There are certainly situations — fortunately, rare — where there are no central authorities or where the State is virtually absent. Nonetheless, even in such situations the cooperation of the parties is still important, for two basic reasons: in order to give humanitarian assistance activities for the victims the greatest possible chance of success, in particular by ensuring the delivery of assistance; and in order to ensure the safety and security of the personnel performing those tasks. Such parameters would help ensure that the international community did not fail to achieve the desired humanitarian objectives.

Sixth, humanitarian activities undertaken by the United Nations would gain from being carried out in close collaboration with the relevant regional organizations and, where appropriate, with the countries of the region.

Seventh, Tunisia reiterates the appeal it made at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly for the definition of the purposes and principles of a policy in this field for the international community. The coordination of humanitarian activities, whether between the various bodies of the United Nations and its specialized agencies or between the United Nations and the other participants, including regional organizations, is essential so that the activities may be part of a comprehensive and integrated approach that will best serve the objectives set for alleviating the hardships suffered by civilians in times of war.

Eighth, we must not overlook the crucial issue of financing for humanitarian activities. In this regard, it is clear that sustained effort from the donor community is highly desirable, in particular to meet the real needs of the hardest-hit regions and countries, in the context of enhanced complementarity of bilateral and multilateral efforts.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate our support for the statement that will be issued at the end of our debate and reaffirm Tunisia's commitment to continuing its contribution to the humanitarian activities undertaken by the United Nations and to augmenting the resources that are needed for those activities.

The President: I thank the representative of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to me, to my country and to Mr. Chowdhury, our Permanent Representative, and his colleagues in our Mission.

Mrs. Ashipala-Musavyi (Namibia): Allow me to congratulate your delegation, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to convene this open meeting on the item "Maintaining peace and security: Humanitarian aspects of issues before the Security Council". We thank you, Sir, for presiding over this important meeting. Let me also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his very important statement, which will indeed contribute immensely to our deliberations today.

The questions posed by the Secretary-General are valid and in our view warrant further and deep thought, without which we may not get it right.

Before making my remarks on today's topic, allow me to briefly touch on another humanitarian issue although it is not directly under consideration by the Security Council. The sheer magnitude of the problems and the fact that the country in question is in the process of post-conflict reconstruction compels me to do so.

I am talking about the immensely difficult time the people of Mozambique are going through as a result of the devastating cyclone Eline. We note with appreciation the pronouncement by the Security Council, in solidarity with the people of Mozambique, seeking support from the international community to enable the people of that country to overcome the devastating effect of the floods. In this regard, we warmly welcome the decision of the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Portugal to write off all of the Mozambican debt. This is a very important and encouraging gesture by those two donor countries, and we appeal to all other States to do likewise. Mozambique needs all the assistance it can get at this very difficult time.

The holding of this debate provides us with an opportunity to reiterate once again the critical and indispensable role the Council can play in alleviating the plight of the war-affected populations on the one hand and the strengthening of the United Nations in the areas of peace-building, peacemaking and peacekeeping on the other.

Humanitarian assistance to war-affected populations has become an important and integral part of recent United Nations operations. Hence, recent peacekeeping operations have included various humanitarian components, such as the protection of children, demobilization and teaching respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. It should be emphasized that the Council's tardy authorization of the deployment of peacekeeping missions with the appropriate mandates, as well as the lack of adequate financial resources, continues to be one of the serious constraints to effective peacekeeping in some parts of the world. This has led to the continued suffering of innocent civilians — particularly women and children and other vulnerable groups affected by armed conflict. The case of the Sierra Leone conflict is a classic example in many respects.

Therefore, while recognizing that the consideration of humanitarian elements in peace negotiations is crucial, we wish to emphasize that where peace agreements have been secured, the Security Council must act swiftly to assist in consolidating the peace by facilitating the implementation of those agreements. By so doing we can avert humanitarian catastrophes and enhance peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to underscore the importance of cooperation from all the parties to a given conflict in facilitating the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

Let me now turn to the issue of prevention. Natural disasters are difficult to prevent, but the same cannot be said about man-made disasters. We strongly believe that the prevention of armed conflict is an important element of the Council's work in addressing humanitarian issues.

In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General rightly stated,

> "Taking prevention more seriously will help to ensure that there are fewer wars and less consequential disasters to cope with in the first place." *(A/54/1, para. 21)*

Therefore, early warning is the best way to avert tragedies in different parts of the world. The Security Council must continue to work to preserve peace at all times, irrespective of the fragility of the peace or the geographical location.

In order to prevent conflict, a sound understanding of the underlying factors is necessary. For example, in Africa, illicit trafficking in, inter alia, small arms and light and heavy weapons needs to be prevented. The relevant recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflicts and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871) need to be implemented.

Another critical area is that of strengthening the coordination mechanisms among the relevant United Nations organs and agencies, regional bodies, other intergovernmental and international organizations and other humanitarian actors. This will ensure correct approaches and complementary programming and avoid the duplication of efforts. It is in this connection that my delegation would appreciate it if the effective cooperation envisioned here could be extended to the host Governments.

My delegation fully agrees with the notion of ensuring the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian agencies to war-affected populations, as this will ensure the prompt and effective delivery of assistance to the needy. However, it is absolutely necessary — in a spirit of transparency and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State concerned — that the humanitarian agencies work in close cooperation with the

host Governments, whose primary responsibility is the security and protection of their citizens. This is not only a confidence-building measure, but will help improve the coordination, management and utilization of scarce resources.

Finally, let me say that it is indispensable that United Nations humanitarian organizations be supported with adequate financial resources. In this regard, the United Nations consolidated appeals should be funded adequatcly.

We look forward to the adoption of the presidential statement later today.

The President: I thank the representative of Namibia for her kind words addressed to me, to my country and to our Permanent Representative here, Mr. Chowdhury.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all I would like to join others in welcoming you, Mr. President, and in expressing gratitude to Bangladesh, to Ambassador Chowdhury and to the entire delegation of Bangladesh for preparing today's meeting.

Russia regards the humanizing of international relations as one of the most important aspects of establishing a non-violent world, which is one of the strategic goals of Russian foreign policy in the twenty-first century.

In this context, we believe that in the mandates of multifunctional peacekeeping operations approved by the Security Council, the important place being assigned to minimizing the human suffering associated with armed conflicts is absolutely justified. This work includes assisting victims of violations of international humanitarian law.

While not equating the functions of the Security Council with those of humanitarian organizations, we are convinced that, under the current circumstances, the Security Council must lend active political support to the activities of these organizations, and that humanitarian work in general must be backed up by the authority of the Security Council. We support the inclusion in documents adopted by the Council of provisions that require parties to conflicts to respect international humanitarian law, ensure the safety of international humanitarian personnel and allow unimpeded access to all those in need of assistance.

Humanitarian assistance should in no way be used as an instrument for exerting political influence on any of the parties to a political conflict, and it should be provided exclusively on the basis of the principles of neutrality and impartiality. The activities of international humanitarian organizations and of the relevant non-governmental organizations should not violate the sovereignty of the host Governments and should not be at odds with the political efforts being made to resolve a given conflict. This is an incontrovertible rule for the coordination of the peacekeeping, humanitarian-assistance and development-assistance efforts of United Nations organs and agencies.

Russia supports the expansion of the practice of consultations and cooperation between the Security Council and humanitarian organizations. This means first and foremost involving the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and all other divisions of the Secretariat here in New York in the planning and preparation stage of peacekeeping operations having a humanitarian component.

The experience of recent years has shown that the prevention and settlement of humanitarian crises has a direct bearing on the maintenance of regional and international stability. But it is also clear that we cannot end violations of international humanitarian law by taking actions that themselves violate the Charter of the United Nations. Arbitrary military measures that sidestep the Security Council — including those taken under the pretext of preventing so-called humanitarian catastrophes — are not acceptable and can only worsen crises.

Russia is open to the idea of working to develop criteria and legal frameworks for activities of the international community, including enforcement activities in cases of extreme humanitarian situations. However, such work should be carried out collectively, and firmly rooted in the United Nations Charter, thus enabling us to provide agreed decisions whose legitimacy would not be subject to doubt.

For these reasons, the Russian delegation supports the adoption of a presidential statement today on the humanitarian aspects of issues before the Security Council.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to me, to my country, Bangladesh, and to Mr. Chowdhury and all his colleagues.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China)(*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes your presence in New

York, Sir, to preside over this meeting of the Security Council. We wish to express our appreciation for the efforts made by the Bangladesh delegation, and especially by Ambassador Chowdhury, in arranging this meeting. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his important statement.

There are still conflicts in many regions of the world today, undermining political stability, economic development and people's livelihood in those regions to varying degrees, and often causing serious humanitarian problems. Innumerable innocent civilians have been affected by these conflicts; tens of thousands, sometimes even millions, are forced to leave their native lands; and vulnerable groups in particular, such as women and children, find themselves in extremely miserable situations. We are deeply concerned about this, and at the same time we wish to express our appreciation for the many efforts made by the relevant United Nations institutions and by international, regional and other humanitarian organizations in alleviating the difficulties facing civilians caught in conflicts. We urge the parties concerned to strictly abide by international humanitarian law, to provide necessary safety guarantees and to ensure unhindered access so that the humanitarian organizations can carry out their relief activities. At the same time, we are in favour of incorporating, as appropriate, humanitarian aspects into those peacekeeping activities authorized by the Security Council.

Like many other delegations, we are of the view that the Security Council, in fulfilling its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, and in reviewing situations of armed conflict, should also pay attention to humanitarian issues caused by conflicts and, especially, take into consideration factors such as humanitarian assistance. It must be pointed out that the recipients of humanitarian assistance are often countries troubled by economic difficulty, political instability and even armed conflict. These countries are vulnerable both politically and economically. As the purpose of humanitarian assistance from the international community, including the United Nations, is to help eliminate or alleviate humanitarian crises in those countries, the unique conditions and difficulties of the country concerned should be given full consideration in carrying out humanitarian assistance activities in order to avoid further complicating the conflict or situation that led to the humanitarian problems there and to avoid aggravating an already difficult or even tragic humanitarian situation. To do so, relevant humanitarian organizations, whether governmental, international or non-governmental, must fully respect the views of the recipient countries, adopt a just, equitable and unbiased position towards all recipient countries or parties and see to it that humanitarian work is not politicized. All parties concerned should be aware that they are carrying out humanitarian activities in a sovereign State; therefore, they should fully respect the laws and customs of the country concerned. Simply providing humanitarian assistance does not give them the right to dictate to the country receiving assistance; nor should they interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign State in the name of humanitarian assistance. More important, humanitarian responses should not be employed as a pretext under which to use force against a sovereign State.

We cannot but notice with concern that, in recent years, the lack of financial resources has placed a great strain on humanitarian activities. We call on the international community to do more in this regard and to give equal attention to humanitarian difficulties and crises wherever they may occur.

We have always maintained that humanitarian issues should be addressed by treating both the symptoms and root causes. In providing humanitarian assistance and performing humanitarian activities, the international community should identify the deeper causes of humanitarian crises and seek their solutions. As is known to all, poverty and economic backwardness, territorial and border disputes inherited from the past and differences among ethnic and religious groups, among other factors, are at the root of unending warfare and worsening humanitarian crises in many regions. Therefore, it is very important to the fundamental alleviation and solution of humanitarian problems that the international community effectively help the relevant countries to eradicate poverty, develop their economies and create a favourable external environment for the relaxation rather than the intensification of disputes and conflicts. This is of practical importance.

In recent years, the Security Council, within the terms of its responsibilities, has considered and adopted resolutions or presidential statements on issues such as protection for humanitarian assistance, protection of civilians in armed conflict and humanitarian assistance to African refugees. These efforts demonstrate the aspiration and determination of the international community to resolve humanitarian issues.

It is our hope that today's open debate will serve to enhance the positive efforts of relevant United Nations

institutions aimed at alleviating and eventually resolving humanitarian problems.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to me and to the Bangladesh delegation, headed by Mr. Chowdhury, regarding the excellent arrangements made and activities carried out.

Mr. Hamer (Netherlands): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's meeting. I am grateful for the tremendous efforts of Ambassador Chowdhury and his delegation in sharpening the Council's focus on the humanitarian aspects of its work.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his introduction. As always, he has identified the key problems in this area. We encourage him to continue to include humanitarian issues in his briefings to the Council. The Secretary-General's exercise of his prerogative under Article 99 of the Charter is an indispensable means of ensuring that the Council can discharge its duties in cases where humanitarian crises endanger international peace and security.

As the current holder of the presidency of the European Union, Portugal will participate in today's debate with a substantial statement on behalf of all members of the European Union, as well as 14 other like-minded European States. I will therefore limit myself to three brief comments that are to be seen in conjunction with the statement to be made by Ambassador Monteiro.

My first comment concerns the need for an integrated approach to the various aspects of the Council's work in this field. Many of those aspects rely for their practical implementation on a variety of United Nations organs and agencies, any number of which may be involved alongside the Council. The Council should therefore encourage the use of instruments such as strategic frameworks to provide for the integration of all relevant elements and actors.

My second point concerns reconciliation, to which the Secretary-General again referred today in the context of humanitarian action. Reconciliation is an essential prerequisite for lasting peace; also, there can be no reconciliation without accountability — and without accountability peace is invariably compromised. The Council should therefore always stress the necessity of the full investigation of war crimes and atrocities, in intra-State as well as inter-State conflicts, as an indispensable means towards national reconciliation.

My third and final point concerns the issue of internally displaced persons. We are grateful to Ambassador Holbrooke for drawing the Council's attention to this problem in such a forceful manner last month, and again in his statement today. It is unacceptable that civilians should be denied protection or relief solely because of their status as internally displaced persons. People fleeing the horrors of armed conflicts and terror should not be treated differently according to whether or not they have managed to cross an international border. Although the responsibility for the appropriate assistance belongs primarily to the States concerned and to the United Nations and other humanitarian aid agencies, the Council has an important role in making sure that this assistance can be provided and that sufficient and secure access to the internally displaced is provided. Furthermore, where the State concerned cannot provide for adequate safety and security of internally displaced persons, the Security Council must address the question of how best to secure such conditions.

The President: I thank the representative of the Netherlands for his kind words addressed to me, and to our delegation, headed by Mr. Chowdhury, for the excellent arrangements they have made.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Today's debate proves that the consideration of humanitarian aspects of the maintenance of international peace and security has firmly taken its rightful place on the agenda of the Security Council. We are glad that this debate is being led by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, whom we warmly welcome. The commitment of his country to humanitarian principles is well known and highly appreciated all over the world. We would also like to thank his delegation led by Ambassador Chowdhury, for organizing this important meeting.

As was stated on many occasions, there is a close interrelation between security and humanitarian crises. Warfare, whether internal or international, gives rise to humanitarian crises which, in turn, fuel further the escalation of conflicts and makes them likely to spread to other countries and regions. It is therefore critically important that when dealing with such situations the Council address humanitarian issues as part of its general strategy aimed at restoring peace and security in conflict zones.

As has already been pointed out by previous speakers, present-day wars are in most cases civil or

inter-ethnic conflicts that involve internal struggles among rival factions. Sadly, many of those conflicts also entail gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. More and more often we witness situations where the main purpose of warring sides is not to subdue the rival group, but rather to exterminate or banish it. In this event, civilians are not simply collateral victims of atrocities committed by parties to a conflict but rather become direct targets of them.

It is encouraging that these challenges are increasingly at the focus of the Council's attention. By addressing these issues the Council not only promotes the protection of civilian populations from the impact of war, but it also contributes to the goal of conflict resolution, thus advancing the maintenance of peace and security.

One of the most acute and recurring challenges in the context of maintaining access to war-affected populations remains the problem of the safety and security of international humanitarian personnel. In this regard Ukraine, as one of the initial sponsors of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, reiterates its support for the idea of drafting an additional protocol to the Convention to provide legal protection to the currently uncovered humanitarian personnel of the United Nations and other international organizations.

It is also important to ensure that humanitarian concerns are fully taken into account in the negotiation of comprehensive peace agreements, and that the relevant humanitarian components are included in such agreements. The inclusion of provisions on the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons, assistance to and re-integration of demobilized combatants, restoration of public security, establishment of a functioning judicial system, as well as other similar provisions in peace accords, has successfully prevented the recurrence of hostilities and ensured the return to normalcy in a number of countries and regions, among them Mozambique, Cambodia and Central America. In this regard, it would be extremely useful to take stock of the experience gained during the past decade in this area and to carry out an analytical review of existing peace agreements, as well as practices in peace negotiations, in order to formulate general approaches to preparing and negotiating future peace arrangements.

Finally, I would like to recall that the growing number of armed conflicts, as well as their brutal character, is to a large extent the result of poverty and decreasing resources, which bring about extensive migration of populations, unemployment and the growth of crime. In this connection, we wish to underline the role that sustainable economic development, the preservation and strengthening of the fabric of society, education and other factors can play in eliminating the causes of conflicts and in preventing them. As far as the mandate of the Security Council is concerned, the drafting and introduction of a long-term preventive strategy concerning the potential sources of conflicts can become one of the practical steps towards — as the Secretary-General put it — the start of "the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention".

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of the draft presidential statement to be adopted at the end of our debate.

The President: I thank the representative of Ukraine for his kind words addressed to me and my country, and to our delegation, headed by Mr. Chowdhury, for the excellent arrangements made here.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): It is a great pleasure to see you here today, Mr. President. I should like, if I may, to join the tributes the have already been paid both to you and to Ambassador Chowdhury and the Bangladesh Mission for the really sterling work that they are doing during the current presidency of the Security Council.

We are very grateful to you, Sir, and to the presidency for taking this important initiative today. The link between humanitarian crisis and conflict is indubitable. That link has been highlighted recently in many aspects of the Council's work, beginning with the debate on human security during the Canadian presidency last year. It is right that the Council should carefully consider the humanitarian aspects of its work. Only then will it be able effectively to factor in this key element to its efforts to stop conflicts and try to prevent them.

It is a truism that humanitarian crises can frequently become the genesis of conflicts. But it is an invariable fact that humanitarian crisis arises from conflict. If the Council is to take full account of all the causes and consequences of conflict, in all its work, including conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building, then it must take full account of the humanitarian aspects. Here I should like to underline the importance of the points just made by the representative

of the Netherlands, which should give us all pause for thought and study.

The presidential statement which you, Mr. President, will deliver at the end of this debate sets out a number of practical humanitarian issues that the Council should and must consider. We welcome the work that you are taking forward on all of them. From the safe provision of humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflict to the incorporation of humanitarian issues in peace agreements: all need to be emphasized. These issues are essential components of a comprehensive strategy in the Council to deal with the causes and consequences of conflict. We hope that today's presidential statement will lead to concrete progress on all of them.

The statement to be made by the representative of the European Union presidency later in the debate will contain some detailed reflections on the issues we are discussing. In the interest of brevity I will not repeat them here. But I want to assure you that the United Kingdom fully shares and supports the views that will be expressed in that statement.

Finally, the United Kingdom would like to express our particular sympathy for the people of Mozambique and to encourage Member States and the humanitarian agencies to continue their efforts to deliver assistance and support to that troubled country.

The President: I must thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his warm remarks to me and also Mr. Chowdhury and members of my delegation. I thank him.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Argentine Republic welcomes the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh in the presidency of the Security Council. I would like to thank you, the Permanent Representative of your country, Mr. Chowdhury, and his delegation for having proposed a topic for this open debate which obliges us to face a very timely matter: the link between Security Council action and emergency humanitarian situations stemming from conflicts under its consideration.

The complexity and the magnitude of the emergency humanitarian situations that surround many of today's evolving conflicts constitute an aspect which must be included when considering matters related to peacekeeping and which demands the Security Council's attention. The scale of the conflicts and their destructive impact on the societies affected require that our Organization, in confronting those situations, take an integral approach, including aspects related to maintenance of peace and security and those related to humanitarian assistance in conflict and to post-rehabilitation and reconstruction of the devastated communities. In accordance with the Charter, the Security Council bears the primary responsibility for peacekeeping-related matters.

The attacks, assassinations, abductions, harassment and all kinds of physical and psychological violence directed against United Nations and associated personnel and humanitarian personnel that were considered during the open debate in the month of February constitute one of the more atrocious faces of the reality of conflicts. An important task that the Security Council can carry out is in the field of the security of United Nations and associated personnel and locally contracted personnel engaged in humanitarian activities. Of the ideas that were set forth on that occasion, I will refer to two today.

The first is the formulation of clear and viable mandates for peacekeeping operations, ensuring that those operations include appropriate modalities for security arrangements for humanitarian assistance personnel who work in the area of activity of the authorized operation, including free and safe access to the affected population.

The second is that the provisions set forth by the Security Council in presidential statement S/PRST/2000/4 deserve to be particularly taken into account in considering all appropriate measures within its scope to ensure the security of humanitarian personnel.

At the same time, the proliferation of attacks on defenceless populations and the use of attacks on civilians — men, women, children, the elderly — as a common tool in the struggle continues to cause grave concern to my country's Government.

When the harm suffered by populations is not an indirect result of a conflict between parties but rather the very objective of the dispute, with the goal of shifting support to one band or another or of eliminating a people for ethnic, political or religious reasons, the need to incorporate the humanitarian component of the peacekeeping mission that is being dispatched then becomes central to the operations. At the same time, there are emergency humanitarian situations which can affect the Council's actions to prevent or put an end to conflicts.

We must step up our efforts to continue to improve the Security Council's coordination with the agencies and bodies of the system engaged in humanitarian assistance activities, without distorting the particular function of each body or agency of the United Nations.

At the same time, new ideas need to be explored in order to address the question of legal protection of the populations affected by conflicts. In this regard, I would like to highlight the work being done by the Security Council working group responsible for studying the Secretary-General's recommendations on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, which may be a significant contribution to the Council in an important aspect of humanitarian actions.

Every moment in history holds its own particular challenge for the actors of international life. My delegation takes the view that the management of the atrocious humanitarian consequences of conflicts is morally the most pressing challenge that the United Nations faces.

The Argentine Republic undertakes to continue to do its utmost to enable the Security Council to make a contribution with the Organization in that work.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina for his kinds words addressed to me, Mr. Chowdhury and members of our Mission for the work they have done in organizing this meeting.

The next speaker is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to see you, Sir, preside over the proceedings of the Security Council, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of a country friendly to Egypt. We not only have friendly and affectionate ties; we also share cultural Islamic traditions that have impacted human civilization throughout history.

I would like to thank you, Sir, for providing us with an opportunity to participate in the debate in the Council today. The contribution, input and views of States that are not members of the Council are undoubtedly important and should be taken into consideration when the Council tries to formulate its position on any subject under debate. Our views are anchored in our conviction that, in dealing with specific issues, the Council's actions are undertaken on behalf of all Members of the United Nations.

Our first comment on the subject under discussion today is that the title of the agenda item provides a very loose framework for discussion, making it very difficult for many Member States to address the issue accurately or to speak about it in specific or definitive terms. The term "humanitarian aspects" can be used to raise various subjects and ideas and involves too many concepts and measures. Frankly, this makes it difficult to deal with the various dimensions or component parts of the question with any reasonable degree of confidence.

However, the delegation of Egypt would like to emphasize a crucial matter we have long discussed over the past few months and years: the importance of maintaining the delicate balance established in the Charter between the responsibilities and functions of the primary bodies of the United Nations, so that each one can fulfil its respective tasks without encroaching upon the responsibilities of the other. Today's debate should not, therefore, be interpreted to mean that the Security Council has become the executive arm of the United Nations system in all areas of its operations and activities or, indeed, of the United Nations system as a whole.

That having been said, we would like, within our understanding of the subject under discussion, to emphasize several points. First, the delegation of Egypt would like to reconfirm its commitment to the long-standing, steadfast position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the need to differentiate between peacekeeping and humanitarian activities. This steadfast position essentially proceeds from our conviction that both activities are premised on neutrality, and that by intervening on a general basis in humanitarian activities and relief efforts when the need arises, peacekeeping forces would strip those humanitarian activities of their neutral character and would make them a legitimate target when conflicts were renewed.

On the other hand, when the Security Council decides to incorporate, within a peacekeeping mission, functions relating to the protection of workers providing humanitarian assistance or relief to those in need of it on the ground, we strongly affirm that there is a need for the Council, within that peacekeeping mandate, to provide for the appropriate resources for United Nations personnel and troops so that they are able to fulfil such missions, as many cases, such as that of Bosnia, have clearly shown the extent of the danger inherent in such operations.

Secondly, the delegation of Egypt has noted that over the past months there have been persistent attempts by various parties, both from within the United Nations membership and from outside, to include vague concepts, or concepts that have not been agreed to, under the term, "peacekeeping", which has become too loose. Regrettably, such attempts, including those formulated outside official United Nations forums, are far from established concepts of peacekeeping, whether conventional ones or even the advanced and modern ones, which are scrutinized by many Member States with a degree of unease.

Furthermore, there is a potential risk, which I must highlight here, that the concept of peacekeeping operations as we have known them in the past might be eroded to such an extent that they might disappear altogether, to be replaced by new concepts that are developing along the lines of, for example, "peace operations". This matter must be determined by the General Assembly and its competent bodies, as they represent the full membership of the United Nations system. The ruling of the Security Council cannot be considered sufficient in this regard, especially given the fact that the General Assembly is the forum where the idea of peacekeeping operations originated, having been established back in 1957.

Thirdly, we note, on the other hand, the interest — indeed, the willingness — of the Council, within the terms of the Charter, to respond favourably in cases of conflict in which humanitarian assistance has been deliberately impeded. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that there is a need for such responses to be carried out in full respect for the operational rules for relief efforts and delivery of assistance to those in need, including respect for the national jurisdiction of the host country, securing its approval in advance in line with the guidelines annexed to General Assembly resolution 46/182, which emphasize the principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanitarianism that form the basis of such humanitarian activity.

Fourthly, as a follow-up to that point, the delegation of Egypt would like to commend the many non-governmental organizations for their humanitarian and relief assistance efforts, whether such efforts are made in cases of natural disaster or of armed conflict. The most important factor that lends credibility to and enhances the effectiveness of their role is the extent of their commitment to humanitarian and charitable causes and their total impartiality and integrity in dealing with humanitarian assistance cases. That must be coupled with full respect for national sovereignty and the national laws of the host country.

Fifthly, children are, perhaps, the group that is most seriously affected and vulnerable in times of armed conflict, whether they are used as fodder for war or are the victims of such conflicts in other ways. The physical, emotional, health and educational damage inflicted on them does not really end with the termination of hostilities. The adverse impact of such damage continues into the next generation. The suffering of women in war is no less severe. Paying adequate attention to women and children in post-conflict reconstruction and recovery programmes has therefore become a major component of post-conflict peace-building efforts.

These matters must be addressed so that the root causes of conflict can be eliminated and prevented from erupting again. From the perspective of the broad United Nations membership, this matter falls well within the purview of the General Assembly, which has the primary role in determining such matters. Indeed, the General Assembly was the body that developed the conditions of and criteria for post-conflict peace-building within the open-ended working group on an Agenda for Peace. It is the General Assembly that can reinvigorate the United Nations system in all its components, organs and agencies in order to rehabilitate any given society once conflict has ended and a crisis is resolved. Furthermore, it has the primary role of mobilizing resources to achieve that end.

Sixthly, the Security Council, in fulfilling its tasks, must act in compliance with all the provisions of the Charter and in conformity with the specific role and responsibility it has been assigned, in order to address all threats to international peace and security. We feel that we must be cautious in expanding the framework and concepts of the Security Council's responsibilities so long as there is no agreement on its recomposition, rules of procedure and current working methods, responsibilities and mandate. Otherwise, the Charter may be at risk of serious violation or the Council may fail to fulfil its tasks and to meet its obligations, which would certainly affect its role, prestige and authority in addressing all legitimate concerns in defence of the interests of the international community, as defined by a consensus of the membership of the world Organization.

Furthermore, we support the idea of ongoing consultation between the Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in order to achieve greater coordination and to avoid duplication. This would lead to complementarity in the functions of the Council, the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in dealing with conflicts at subsequent stages, in full respect

of the mandates of all organs of the United Nations, as laid down in the Charter.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt for his kind words addressed to me and to my country. I also appreciate very sincerely his mention of the excellent relations between our countries. I remember my recent visit to Cairo and to my good friend, his Foreign Minister, Mr. Amre Moussa, as well my meeting with his President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Belarus. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vantsevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus welcomes you, Sir, as President of the Security Council and as the representative of a State that is an active Member of the United Nations and of the Non-Aligned Movement. We are certain that your presidency will enrich the activities of the Security Council and give them new dynamism and effectiveness. The Council's very busy working agenda this month reaffirms that conviction.

The Government of the Republic of Belarus welcomes the Security Council's increasing attention to humanitarian issues. The human factor has always been and remains a central link in all of the activities to establish international peace and security. Belarus, whose every fourth inhabitant was killed in the Second World War, knows the true value and significance of humanism and humanitarian activity. Focusing the attention of the Security Council on humanitarian aspects of the maintenance of peace and universal stability considerably enhances the role of that central organ of the United Nations in world affairs.

On the other hand, all those meeting today in this Chamber are very well aware that this issue has not become relevant by mere chance. Wars and conflicts, which have brought suffering to millions of people and take human lives every day, are today's tragic reality. An analysis of the international situation at the turn of the century and the millennium, regrettably, does not instil us with optimism for a substantial reduction of armed conflict in our world in the foreseeable future.

In this context, it is important to emphasize the substantial progress which the Security Council has made in defining the humanitarian dimension of mandates for peacekeeping forces. Belarus welcomes in particular resolution 1291 (2000), the Council's most recent on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Pursuant to that resolution, the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorizes it to

> "take the necessary action, in the areas of deployment of its infantry battalions and as it deems it within its capabilities, to protect United Nations and co-located JMC personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel, and protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence". (*resolution 1291 (2000), para. 8*)

We are convinced that, together with other tools available to the Security Council — first among which is an effective arms embargo in the area of conflict — the measures undertaken will allow us substantially to improve the situation with regard to ensuring the safety of United Nations and associated personnel, which the Security Council discussed in detail in February.

Ensuring the unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to all those in need in areas of hostility is a priority task for all United Nations peacekeeping missions. The monitoring functions for the enforcement of this requirement are the responsibility of the Security Council. The resolution on the Democratic Republic of the Congo inspires our optimism in this area. All those responsible for violating the rules of such access must bear the most serious responsibility, since timely assistance will, more often than not, determine what is most important: saving human lives.

In this context, the Security Council cannot further countenance criminal impunity, the consequences of which, as a rule, are tragic. In this regard, the question of the legal guarantee of humanitarian activities and of the need to establish real tools that will allow the world community to hold accountable all those who violate international documents of humanitarian law continues to be a priority of the work of the States Members of the United Nations. Without an effective solution to these problems, we will continue to bear silent witness to crimes committed against civilians, humanitarian personnel and diplomatic officials and to crimes against humanity.

Sanctions imposed by the Security Council remain a significant tool for ensuring peace and security. We are convinced of their absolute effectiveness in a number of conflict regions of the world. Angola can be taken as an example. The fruitful efforts of the Chairman of the

sanctions committee, Ambassador Robert Fowler, are no doubt having significant positive results.

Despite the effectiveness of sanctions in some regions, we remain witnesses to situations where a given enforcement measure plays an entirely opposite role. The situation in Iraq is a confirmation of this. We cannot remain silent over this contradiction in humanitarian activities. Resolution 1284 (1999), which, when it was adopted, inspired optimism on the part of many Member States as a possibility for overcoming a humanitarian crisis in that country, has not yet justified those hopes. We believe that this situation should be the subject of a detailed discussion by the Security Council in the very near future, in order to take the most effective measures to correct it.

The past year has been marked by new trends and approaches in consideration by the Security Council, and in fact by the entire United Nations, of a number of fundamental dimensions in humanitarian activities. The attention of the world community was drawn to the emergence of a concept of so-called humanitarian intervention. We are convinced that the basis of this approach is illogical from the start. We cannot put an end to war with war, or through anti-humanitarian actions correct human rights violations. The legalization of such an approach, in our understanding, is fraught with unforeseeable danger. In new circumstances, whereby the nature of conflicts has changed, humankind must find a compromise and find a true balance between the sovereignty of States and the sovereignty of the individual. We see, first and foremost, the United Nations Charter as a basis for this work. By way of an instrument for the discussion of this issue, Belarus has proposed the establishment of an open-ended group in the General Assembly. An important role could be played by the further implementation of the programme of action for a culture of peace. We are all witnesses to the many fruitful efforts undertaken by Bangladesh in this area.

It is quite obvious that the topic for today's discussion is becoming more relevant and richer in content day by day. Belarus is prepared to make its contribution to this activity and will do its utmost to give real content and meaning to the decisions of the Security Council in this sphere.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his kind words addressed to me and my country. I invite him to resume the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.30 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.35 p.m.